

## HIGHLIGHTS OF MARYLAND'S ESEA FLEXIBILITY REQUEST

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### COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY EXPECTATIONS FOR ALL STUDENTS

Maryland adopted rigorous English language arts and math standards now in place in 45 other states and the District of Columbia and thoroughly analyzed their alignment with Maryland's existing State standards. Subsequently, the State convened a group that included educators, instructional coaches, district staff and others to revise its current curriculum frameworks. Maryland has a strong plan to ensure full implementation of these standards in classrooms, schools, and districts across the State through extensive curriculum re-design and alignment for all students, working with institutions of higher education to prepare pre-service teachers, and developing and posting an online Instruction Toolkit that includes Universal Design for Learning tools for students with disabilities and English Learners.

### IMPROVED STATE AND DISTRICT ACCOUNTABILITY AND SUPPORT FOR ALL STUDENTS

**Index System Based on High Expectations and Multiple Measures:** Maryland developed an index that includes student achievement data in English language arts, math, and science; growth data in English language arts and math; and high school graduation and drop-out rates to categorize schools. Maryland's index will differentiate schools into one of five strands which determine the district and State support schools receive. The State affords top-performing schools greater flexibility while lower-performing schools receive progressively more prescriptive technical assistance and monitoring.

**Ambitious Performance Targets:** Maryland established new performance targets that will cut the achievement gap in half within six years.

**Aggressive Plan for Turning Around the Lowest-Performing Schools:** Maryland will identify the lowest-performing schools in the State as "Priority schools" and ensure that districts implement meaningful interventions in these schools. Maryland will require Priority schools to complete a needs assessment and select from a set of targeted strategies designed to meet identified needs (i.e., staff capacity building, staff collaboration and planning time). Schools will receive technical assistance from their districts in the development and implementation of school improvement plans.

**Renewed Focus on Closing Achievement Gaps:** Maryland will identify the schools in the State with the greatest challenges for groups of students as "Focus schools" and demand interventions to improve student performance. Focus schools must complete a needs assessment and select one or more required strategies.

**Building Capacity for School Improvement:** Maryland has established the State Breakthrough Center to collaborate with the district-based Turnaround Offices to develop, implement, and evaluate school improvement strategies in its lowest-performing schools.

**Increased District Accountability:** All Maryland districts complete a Master Plan and all schools create School Improvement plans annually. The State has the authority to withhold future funding if it determines a district's Master Plan to be insufficient.

**Transparently Reporting on Student's Progress:** Maryland will make a wide array of data available to the public through the State report card web site that includes school, district, and State level data on student subgroup performance. From this site, the public will be able to monitor the progress and improvement of schools.

## **SUPPORTING EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION AND LEADERSHIP**

Maryland piloted its new teacher and principal evaluation system in seven districts in the 2011-2012 school year, plans to pilot in all districts in the 2012-13 school year, and will fully implement the system in the 2013-14 school year. The pilot conducted in 2011-12 included those districts serving the majority of the State's high-poverty students. Maryland intends to refine the system based on the pilot results. The system incorporates multiple measures for evaluating teachers and principals including student growth, classroom observation, planning preparation, and classroom environment. Maryland established the Educator Effectiveness Council (the Council) to give all stakeholders a voice in the process of developing new teacher and principal evaluation systems. Representatives include leaders of teacher unions and teacher-representatives, all district superintendents, local school board members, institutions of higher education, etc. The Council issued an interim report which formed the basis of the proposed evaluation system, and will continue to monitor pilot results to inform the development of the system.